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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 23-24, 2002

1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for November 23-24, 2002. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICS, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

2. ANTI-PKK OPERATIONS IN ISTANBUL AND BINGOL (Evrensel) Police arrested Mehmet Hanifi Gurdegir during an anti-PKK (KADEK) operation in Istanbul. In a separate operation in Bingol, police arrested Gurdegir's brother Gokmen Gurdegir and his cousin Dogan Gurdegir, both of whom were "accused of membership in a terror organization and organizational activities."

3. FORTEEN-YEAR OLD ARRESTED FOR SEPARATISM (Evrensel) In Bismil (Diyarbakir), a fourteen-year-old primary school student was arrested for saying "Happy is he who says 'I am a Kurd.'" when "Our Oath" was being sung. The school principal and teachers were reported to have beaten the student. The student may be indicted for "inciting the public to separatism through appeals to race."

4. YOUTHS INDICTED (Evrensel) Sixteen Adiyaman youths have been indicted for "membership in and support of a terror organization (i.e., PKK/KADEK). The indictment followed the youths' shouting pro-Kurdish language education and pro-(PKK leader Abdullah) Ocalan slogans during the May 1 Labor Day celebrations in Adiyaman. The Malatya State Security Court will handle the case.

5. EMEP OFFICIAL'S GRAVESTONE BROKEN (Evrensel) Military officials were reported to have broken the gravestone of Tunceli Labor Party (EMEP) official Abbas Tugrul, who had lost his life in a car crash. The words "He was the voice of laborers" was written on Tugrul's gravestone. The gravestones of two killed "guerillas" buried in Pertek (Tunceli) had also been broken. The EMEP provincial chairman condemned the attack, claiming the effects of the martial law and the State of Emergency (OHAL) practices, in effect (in the Southeast) for nearly 25 years, still continue.

6. PUNISHMENT FOR KURDISH-LANGUAGE SONGS (Radikal) Five Diyarbakir teachers, all members of the State Employees' Union Confederation (KESK) Music Group, have been removed from public employment for having sung Kurdish-language songs at the February Congress of the Teachers Union Egitim-Sen in Diyarbakir. Egitim-Sen Diyarbakir chapter President Abdullah Demir called the decision "unacceptable and inconsistent with recently-passed laws." Egitim-Sen will reportedly appeal to the Regional Administrative Court. EVRENSEL called for withdrawal of the dismissal, while the Human Rights Association (HRA) called on officials to explain whether or not Kurdish was banned.

7. DEATH PENALTIES COMMUTED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT (Evrensel) Following the passage by the Parliament of the EU Harmonization Laws, the Diyarbakir State Security Court has commuted capital punishments given to 180 people for membership in the PKK and Hizbullah to life imprisonment.

18. MUS MAN MISSING

(CUMHURİYET) Varto (Mus) resident Sidik Kaya disappeared on November 20, when he reportedly left home to meet with local Jandarma official Celal Sen following a telephone call. The Security Directorate and the local Jandarma Command denied having arrested Kaya. However, Sen admitted having talked to Kaya regarding his Turkish Health Insurance Card application, but denied having telephoned him at home. Kaya's father, Tekdemir Kaya, applied to the Mus Human Rights Association (HRA) for assistance as he said he was concerned about his son's well being. Later, the HRA faxed a message to the Interior and Justice Ministries, the Mus Governor and the Prosecutor's Offices and called on Amnesty International to respond urgently.

19. PKK SUSPECT ARRESTED

(Türkiye/Cumhuriyet) According to the Hakkari Governor's Office, Security Directorate teams arrested Nadir Ciftci, who they determined to have illegally sent two people to Iran in order to join the PKK.

HOLTZ